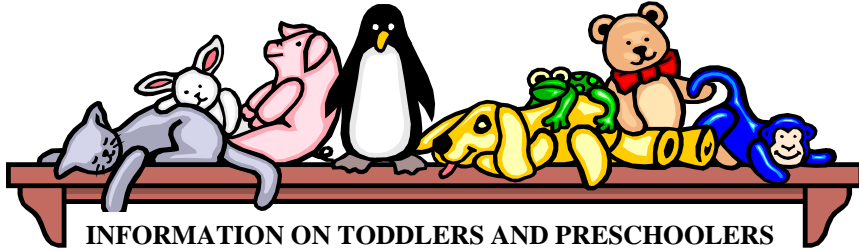




TODDLER TOPICS: 2005



INFORMATION ON TODDLERS AND PRESCHOOLERS

ISSUE NO. FIVE

Dear Parent:

It's always fun to watch children learn to do something new as they grow. Your toddler is developing emotionally, cognitively (mentally), socially and physically. Your role as a parent is to provide activities that promote growth in each of these areas. Recent studies show that many of our children are not getting enough age appropriate activities for physical growth. This issue of Toddler Topics will explore your toddler's physical development and provide suggestions of what you can do to encourage that development.

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PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT-WHAT TO EXPECT

Your child's physical development involves the coordination of two important areas of movement. One is movement controlled by the large muscles, sometimes called gross motor. The other is movement controlled by the small muscles, also known as fine motor.

Muscular growth follows a direction.

- Large muscles mature before small muscles.
- Growth occurs from the head to the foot.
- Growth starts at the core of the body and proceeds outward.

Watch your child develop physically, you can observe a predictable sequence of skills. It's important to know that while every child goes through the same sequence, each child masters these skills at his own pace. Some children will accomplish the skills sooner; others may be later.

Sincerely,

Nancy E. Crago, Ph.D., C.F.C.S.
Extension Educator

Penn State Cooperative Extension in your county provides educational programs of interest to children, youth and families. Contact your county office at: Allegheny County Cooperative Extension, 400 North Lexington Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15208-2521, 412-473-2540. E-mail us at: AlleghenyExt@psu.edu. Visit our web site at: Allegheny.extension.psu.edu

Large Motor Development

Age	Walking	Running	Jumping	Climbing
1 - 2 years	Walks in a toddle and uses arms for balance (arms are not swung)	Moves rapidly in a hurried walk, in contact with surface	Uses bouncing step off bottom step of stairs with one foot	Tries to climb up anything climbable
2 – 3 years	Walks upstairs two feet on a step	Runs stiffly, has difficulty turning corners and stopping quickly	Jumps off bottom steps with both feet	Tries climbing to top of equipment, but can't climb down
3 – 4 years	Walks with arms swinging; walks upstairs alternating feet; walks downstairs two feet on step	Runs more smoothly has more control over starting and stopping	Springs up off floor with both feet in some cases, jumps over object leading with one foot	Climbs up and down ladders, jungle gyms, slides, and trees

Source: Beaty, Janice J. Observing Development of the Young Child, 3rd. Ed., p. 175.

Encouraging Your Child's Large Motor Development

Offer your child a variety of experiences to develop skills. Give her time each day to practice them. The more she practices, the more skilled she will become.

Locomotor skills – walking, running, hopping, skipping, galloping, sliding, leaping, climbing, crawling, chasing.

Try this: Teach your child to gallop:
Lift and bend the front leg.

Take a big step forward by stepping on the front foot and bringing the rear foot forward.

Keep one foot in front of the body at all times.

Stability skills – turning, twisting, bending, stopping, rolling, balancing, jumping and landing, stretching, curling, swinging, and swaying.

Try this: Balancing

Using masking tape, place straight and zigzag lines on floor.

Extend arms to the side.

Practice walking on the lines without stepping off.

Practice walking backward.

Try walking forward and backward.

MANIPULATIVE SKILLS: Throwing, catching, kicking, punting, dribbling, striking with rackets and striking with long handled objects.

Try this: Throw at targets, attach a target to the wall above a large box. Use yarn balls, bean bags, or rolled up newspaper. Grasp ball with one or both hands. Step forward with foot opposite the throwing arm. Throw ball away from the body toward target. Follow through while maintaining balance.

Note: See Rain or Sun for more large motor activity ideas.

Fine Motor Development

Some important behaviors to expect from three year olds are:

- String large beads
- Place large pegs into boards
- Pour liquids with some spills
- Build block towers
- Easily does puzzles with whole objects represented as a piece
- Fatigues easily when much hand coordination is required
- Draws shapes, such as a circle
- Begins to design objects, ex. House.
- Holds crayons or markers with fingers instead of fist
- Undresses without assistance but needs help getting dressed.

Encouraging Development of Your Child's Fine Motor Skills

Fine motor development involves the small muscles that control the extremities. Giving your child opportunity to practice using his large muscles positively affects his ability to develop his small muscles. Encourage your child to use his small muscles as soon as he can. When your child is ready, provide a variety of manipulative activities to help him learn and practice skills he needs to use his hands and fingers with control, coordination and dexterity.

One way to recognize your child's readiness to control and do certain actions is to observe certain behaviors. Between the age of 2-1/2 and 3 years, your child will probably show a hand preference. Many American parents are concerned about their child's hand dominance. They encourage their child to use their right hand. They believe right handedness will contribute to success in learning to read and write. Much controversy exists over this issue. The best thing you can do is to help your child develop fine motor dexterity, regardless of their hand preference.

Your child can develop control dexterity of the wrist, hand, and fingers by doing activities that involve twisting, turning, and rotating. **Try this:** Children 2-3 years old can turn doorknobs and try to open or close doors if they can reach the door knob. Give child an assortment of empty plastic bottles and jars with screw top lids. Provide puzzles with varying difficulty. Visit a flea market to get a variety of grinding, cranking, and squeezing implements. Let three year olds help with cooking activities, such as beating eggs with a rotary egg beater, twisting oranges on a citrus reamer to make juice, scraping carrots, stirring ingredients, or grinding cooked apples with a food mill. Give the child plastic pitchers and glasses or other containers and let her practice pouring liquids from the pitcher into the glass. This encourages the child to develop their small muscle skills and learn to take care of herself. When spills occur, let her help clean up with a sponge, another good fine motor activity.

Promoting Your Child's Fitness

You probably think your toddler is active enough to keep fit, but recent research shows us that today's children are not getting enough physical activity. This can lead to obesity and diabetes. Studies show the typical overweight child begins to gain weight between the ages of three to five years.

Your child's attitudes toward physical fitness are being formed now. When obesity and inactivity continue into adulthood, there is a serious risk of heart disease and high blood pressure.

To help your child maintain a healthy weight:

Provide many chances for active play, both indoors and outdoors.

Provide three to five minutes of exercise that leaves your child breathless several times a day.

Limit the number of fast food meals and snacks.

Offer meals at regular times each day to avoid grazing.

Replace more than 1-2 hours of TV watching with physical activity.

Replace high calorie beverages and foods with healthier choices.

Become a Fit Family

Being physically active with your child is good for both of you. You will build a strong and healthy body, reduce your risk of developing heart disease, diabetes, colon cancer and high blood pressure. The biggest reason for being physically active together is that it is fun!

Take walks together. Walk around your neighborhood. Watch the seasons change. Don't expect to walk far or to keep a steady pace. Young children like to stop and talk about what they see. If you want to walk a steady pace, let your child ride a tricycle or peddle car while you walk. You may even have to jog to keep up to your child.

Work together on household chores.

Play the "15 Minute Pick Up." Play some music while every family member cleans or puts things away as fast as they can for 15 minutes. Your toddler will need someone to work with him. At the end of this time, you will have done some exercise and your house will be cleaner.

Don't be a couch potato.

Limit TV, video games, and computer games. Avoid eating and snacking in front of the television. It causes overeating and inactivity.

LETS GET PHYSICAL!

Guest Author: Erik J. Vecere, Executive Director, National Fatherhood Initiative's Community-based Programming

Okay dads, it's time to get excited about our kid's physical activity! And there are many things we can do to help them (and us) be active during the toddler years. After all, it is vital that our kids develop a healthy lifestyle early so they practice it the rest of their lives.

There are many things we can do that don't require intense training on our part. I do a 15-minute stretch routine a few times a week before running. My toddler loves to stretch with me. It's amazing how kids mirror their dads, and I love to see my little Katie going through those stretches with me. Whether or not you run, stretching is a great activity you can do with your child as well.

I've also had a lot of fun dancing and playing with Katie, which can be great exercise. We will play a CD and make up all kinds of funny dances. Sometimes, she pretends to ice skate to the music. Of course, I have to be her coach, cheering section and the TV commentators all at one time, which can be challenging. We've enacted scenes from one of her favorite movies about a horse. It's amazing how much energy she uses galloping around!

Family vacations can also be great for physical activity. Wherever we go, I make sure there's a blend of swimming, hiking, and biking. This also allows dads to model a physically active lifestyle to our children.

Finally, once our children get older, we can encourage them to take part in an individual sport. Both of my girls are still experimenting with this. Last year, they both took part in a gymnastics camp. Previous years have involved dance and horseback riding. The goal is to keep it fun and active. I've also used my love for football to initiate some great outdoor and indoor games as a family.

So, stretch out and join me in keeping our kids physically active. Maybe I'll even see you at the field!

More Information for Fathers

National Fatherhood Initiative

<http://www.fatherhood.org>

101 Lake Forest Boulevard, Suite 360

Phone: 301-948-0599

Center for Successful Fathering

<http://www.fathering.org>

13470 Research Blvd, Suite L 2

Austin, TX 78750

Toll-Free Phone Number 1-800-537-0853

The National Center for Fathering

<http://www.fathers.com>

PO Box 412888

Kansas City, MO 64141

The FathersNetwork*

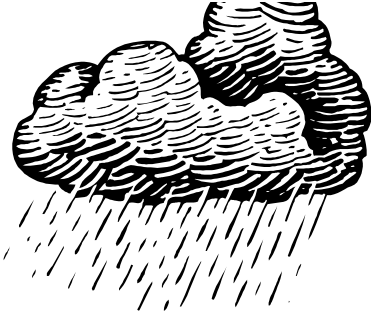
<http://fathersnetwork.org>

*Resources and support for families raising children with developmental disabilities and special health care needs.

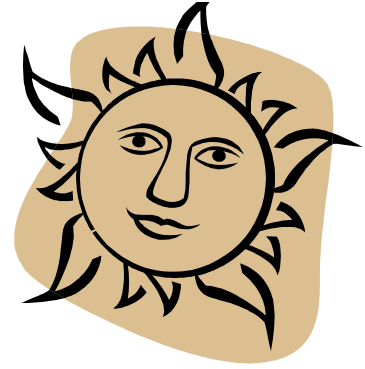
Penn State encourages persons with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodations or have questions about the physical access provided, please contact your local Cooperative Extension Office in advance of your participation or visit.

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RAIN OR SUN



JUMP ON BOTH FEET

Hang a balloon or lightweight ball from a tree or ceiling fixture about the height of our child's reach. Show your child how to jump by bending her knees and lifting her feet off the ground. Tell your child to jump up, hit the ball with her hands, and land on both feet with her knees bent.

SHAKER INSTRUMENT

Using a clean, small plastic bottle with a lid, help your child put macaroni, seeds or small stones into the bottle until it is about one-fourth full. (Adult supervision is needed so your child does not put small objects into his mouth.) Have your child put the lid on the bottle. Fasten the lid with tape or glue so the lid can't be removed.

Let your child shake the bottle. Ask, "What makes the sound?"

Have him try shaking the bottle in different ways, fast, slow, in a rhythm. Play music and have your child shake to the rhythm of the music.

Square Hop

Securely tape 4 colored squares (5" X 5") to the sidewalk or floor. Show your child how to jump from square to square. Stop at each square to get ready for the next jump.